



Saint Louis Audubon Bulletin

Volume 40 Number 4

January 1974

EAGLES - EAGLES - EAGLES

Again the St. Louis Audubon Society has been asked to participate in the Mississippi Valley Winter Bald Eagle Count. This will be the 8th time we have taken part.

The date is Saturday, February 16th, and the area is from Winfield Dam, north to Saverton.

Last year 200 "birders" braved the cold on February 20th and the official count was 96 eagles, 60 adult, 29 immature and 7 unknown. Again we have the able leadership of McCune Dudley and Gus Artus of Louisiana and Earl Hath, past-president of the Society. They will map the area and different groups will cover specified areas.

The meeting place will be the plant of "Kamp Togs" in Clarksville, Missouri at 9:00 A.M. Clarksville is 1½ hours drive from the Clayton Court House. It is reached by following interstate 70 to St. Peters. Then north on Route 79 to Clarksville. "Kamp Togs" is on the left-hand side entering Clarksville from the south. Coffee and doughnuts will await you at "Kamp Togs".

COME ONE - COME ALL!

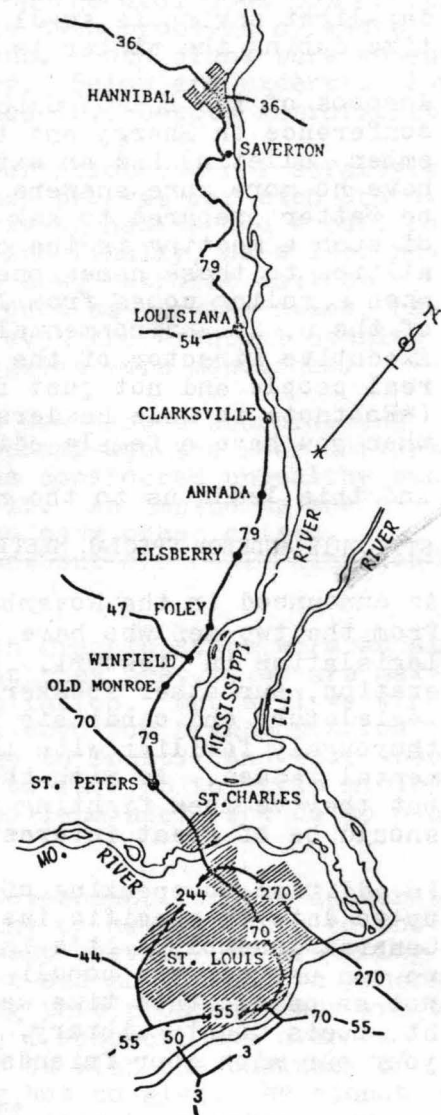
For further information, call St. Louis Audubon Society; 965-8642.

SPECIAL MEETING: FRIDAY, JANUARY 18

SPEAKERS: JACK SCHRAMM

ED STEGNER

See page 2 for details



We care



we use recycled paper



This is the third year in a row that we have used the Eagles-Eagles-Eagles front page; we hope it won't have to be the last. And looking at our more recent issues, we realize that this is the third time the ENERGY CRISIS (that's become a proper noun by now) has been part of our page 2 comments. It's a sure bet this won't be the last of that topic.

First things first. We are making plans for the Eagle Count at Clarksville as usual, but please notice the phone number. It's best to call Earl or Connie Rath in the evenings or on week-ends, but you should do it before you make final plans to go eagling (if that isn't a word we hereby declare it to have become one - as in 'birding' or 'beagling'. Webster-Merriam please note). We must car pool, not only for the eagle count, but also for any of the other field trips we are so optimistically announcing. With year-round day-light saving (a small cheer from this early waking day-owl!) the meeting time during the winter is being changed from eight to nine.

Apropos of the ENERGY CRISIS, the three hundred plus people who attended the conference on Energy and the Environment at UMSL on November 30th (see November Bulletin) had an extremely interesting day. Although they probably have no more sure answers than anybody else seems to have, the attendees may be better prepared to ask the right questions. One of the worthwhile aspects of such a meeting is the opportunity of being able to put faces and personalities to those names one encounters so often in the news. For example, when a ruling comes from Jerome Svore, Administrator of the Regional Office of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, or a statement from Ed Stegner, Executive Director of the Conservation Federation of Missouri, these are from real people and not just faceless names - and we no longer skip the news item* (*Footnote to Male Readers - This is the kind of thing you have to put up with when you have a female editor - female reactions. Pax-Womens Lib.)

And this leads us to the next important item:

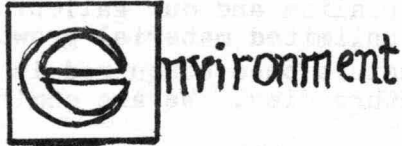
ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SPECIAL MEETING - FRIDAY, JANUARY 18

As announced in the November Bulletin we will have the privilege of hearing from the two men who have been in the forefront of action for Environmental Legislation in Missouri. In addition to Ed Stegner of the Conservation Federation, our other speaker will be Jack Schramm, former member of the Missouri Legislature and candidate for Lieutenant Governor. Both of these men are thoroughly familiar with the ins and outs of legislative action on Environmental issues. As with the rest of us, they've won a few and lost a few, but they've been fighting the battle for all of us and what they have to say should be of great interest.

In addition to speaking of legislative action in general they will bring us up to date on specific issues to be considered in the 1974 Session of the General Assembly. It's important for us all to become better informed so that we can use our vox populi - intelligently. Note that the time and place are not as usual; this time we will meet at 8:00 PM, Friday, January 18, at the St. Louis County Library, 1640 South Lindbergh Blvd. Do come - and fill your car with your friends.

FOLLOW-UP ON THE BIG PINEY (see November Bulletin)
There will be a hearing of the Clean water Commission on the pollution problems of the Big Piney river at the high school in Houston, Missouri at 7 pm on Wednesday, January 16. If you are interested in learning more about this (or in attending the hearing) please call Betty Wilson, 991-2806

Focus on the



BETTY WILSON

The Energy Problem has made us realize that our natural resources are finite. We are running out! With 7% of the world's population the U.S. uses 50% of its natural resources. One of the methods of solving the twin problems of waste and pollution is to adopt Transportation Control Plans. Such plans were announced last summer by the Environmental Protection Agency. Below are excerpts from a speech on this and related topics by John R. Quarles Jr., Deputy Administrator EPA.:

....Generally, the plans consisted of three transportation control strategies. The first was a mandatory inspection and maintenance program for each State. The second was the encouragement of a change in driving habits and a call for increased use of mass transit to reduce traffic. And finally, as a last resort and where only absolutely necessary under the law, retrofit devices would be required. More specifically, such techniques as parking taxes, reduction of parking places, gasoline rationing and even the eventual banning of all automobile traffic in such cities as Los Angeles were mentioned.

A public outcry was expected and received.....What was most disturbing and revealing about reactions to the "un-American" proposal was the near universal naivete as to the purpose behind it. Pollution was considered unhealthy but so were many other things--People could live with it. An impending energy crisis was warned of--but we had made it through so many other crises. Traffic congestion was, among other things, tedious--but one could also see it as a barometer of progress.

In general, it just could not be believed that such drastic steps were at all necessary. I am afraid that I must inform you that they are.....We are making progress in our fight against air and water pollution. But will we win a true and lasting victory? Will we falter at the need for transportation controls? Will we retreat when the costs come home to roost? And what about the other environmental needs? When are we going to face up to strip mining, urban sprawl, mounting solid waste and uncontrolled land use? Why do so many things continue to get worse?

We are going to have to look beyond Industry and Government for the answer to these and other fundamental questions. We are going to have to turn to the People for whom Industry produces and whom Government serves. We are going to have to test their commitment to the environment and to our unborn generations.....We are heading for a showdown. In facing this prospect, the gravest threat to our ultimate survival and well-being is, I suspect, the average citizen's inclination to ignore the facts and "get on with the business of living" which we call progress. But---- something has to give. We cannot have infinite exploitation of finite resources. We have to choose: Our economy and progress unlimited; or survival and learning to live with limitations. For we can no longer have our cake and eat it too. The choice is emerging with irrepressible force. And because it is, we face a time of wrenching change. A time when we must violently turn ourselves around and alter our course lest we plummet into the maws of disaster. And we must act quickly, for we have years of exploitation and neglect to overcome. →

In 1893, a young historian named Frederick Jackson Turner, seeking to explain the American characteristics of individualism and love of democracy, presented his now famous Frontier Theory. He claimed: "The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development."

Turner declared the Frontier closed in 1880 and called it a watershed in American history. He saw the far reaching effects of that change on the entire sweep of American economic and even social development. Yet for a century we have fought off the most fundamental implication of the closing of the frontier. Through the rise of industrialism and our galloping technological advance we have clung to the myth of unlimited material growth----Now we are being forced to a new realization: nature once conquered is in mortal danger of being broken. And once broken, nature dies. We are coming dangerously close to that precipice.

As Turner declared the Frontier closed in 1880, so must we declare that "cowboy consumerism" and unbridled progress is at an end. We must begin a new era founded on renewed respect for the quality of our life as opposed to the quantity in our life.



AN INVITATION TO WGNSS

We have frequently referred in these pages to a sister organization- The Webster Groves Nature Study Society, known by its initials WGNSS (and pronounced by its aficionados as Wigness). For the benefit of those who are not members, the Audubon Bulletin usually lists some of its birding trips, but there are many others in such fields as Botany, Lower Plants, and Geology. Far from being limited to a fortunate few who happen to live in Webster its membership (which costs \$3.00 a year) is world wide. By sending a check for this amount to the treasurer, Mrs. Clinton Phillips, 658 N. Harrison, St. Louis 63122, you can receive its excellent bulletin, Nature Notes, and also be informed of all its field trips, study groups, and meetings.

The immediate occasion for these comments is an advance schedule of meetings planned for 1974. These are held at the County Library at Lindbergh and Clayton at 8:00 p.m. and are open to all. The programs, always on Fridays, are as follows:

January 11- Eugene Brucker- The Grand Canyon and Rocks Which Tell A Story

February 8- Jim Jackson- Ecology of the Forest Floor

March 1- Peter Raven- The Evolution and Meaning of Flowers



AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM

Galapagos by Martin Bruce should provide an enchanting evening for everyone who is interested in Las Islas Encantadas, as the early Spanish explorers called these islands. The time and place, as usual, -8:15 at the Ethical Society, 9001 Clayton Road, the date- February 1.

The next, and last, film will be Grassroots Jungle by Fran Hall. The date is March 8, which comes uncomfortably close to the Bulletin publication date, so mark your calendars now for both Friday evenings.



RARE BIRDS IN OUR AREA

WHEN - WHERE - WHY

Dick Anderson

As with most hobbies, especially nature hobbies, birding is whatever the birder wants to make it. He may have lists of birds recorded from all over the world, country, state, local areas or even a yard. However, a person certainly does not have to make a list to enjoy birding. Similarly, a birder may enjoy as much from birding a local woods, park or weed patch as others who spend much time and money chasing all over the world. A birder can study ornithology in a very serious manner or enjoy birding in a very casual way. Whichever group a birder fits, he really has no right to criticize one who sees things differently.

However, the one thing many birders enjoy the most is seeing a rare bird. This is what causes the most excitement and the hot lines ringing. Usually finding a rarity is more of a thrill than dashing off with someone's instructions, but if it is a lifer or even a local lifer, this too can be rewarding. Getting another birder to confirm your own find is also a pleasurable feeling.

Now then - what is a rare bird? Basically, there are three classes of rarity: (1) Rare, such as Whistling Swan, (2) casual, such as Cinnamon Teal and (3) accidental, such as Brant. All of these terms have to do with how many times a species has been recorded. A very rare find should be seen by a top birder or better, a group of birders or perhaps the sighting may not be accepted. Often a photograph can be valuable proof.

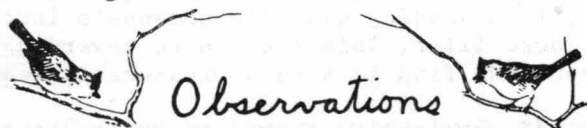
Now to when-where and why. When: This is the easiest to answer. Rare birds have been recorded in all twelve months. More have been recorded during the spring and fall migrations, but mid-winter has produced northern wanderers and mid-summer has likewise produced southern wanderers. The first rule for any good birder should be - identify every bird at all times of the year. Where: This also is fairly easy to answer. Rarities can occur almost anywhere. Naturally, more have been found at the heaviest birded areas such as Busch Wildlife, Mark Twain Refuge, Alton Dam and the Illinois levees. On the other hand rare northern finches have turned up at yard feeders, White Pelicans and Glaucous Gulls have been seen on the Mississippi River at downtown St. Louis. Peregrine Falcons have been seen many times in downtown St. Louis (feeding on pigeons) and this fall I saw two Swainson's Hawks flying high over downtown with a group of Broad-winged Hawks. Last fall a lady in North Kansas City found three Clark's Nutcrackers at her yard feeder. Shortly after, a lady in Columbia, Missouri saw a Grove-billed Ani by just looking out her kitchen window. Of course, if you want to see an Avocet you have slim chance in your backyard; you should bird the mudflats. For rare ducks try Busch or Alton Dam or Mark Twain Refuge. If you are after a particular rare bird, learn that species' habitat and most likely time of year. Why: This is the most difficult to answer. In fact many answers simply just are not known. Bird species have normal breeding ranges and normal migration routes. Why, then, do they vary from the norm? In the last 70 years about 36 new species have been added to the Missouri bird list. About half of these are western species. Throughout the year our prevailing winds are from the west, so it is easy to assume that many birds are blown off course. This may be true in some cases, but then how do eastern species windup in California? Many ornithologists believe that some birds simply lose their natural sense of direction. This seems more true in fall when immature birds, who have never migrated, are found far out of range. An example of this would be the immature Hermit Warbler found in northwest Missouri, well over 1,000 miles out of range. The rarest bird ever recorded at St. Louis was Harcourt's Petrel. The bird was found exhausted following a southern storm, which was the remains of a Gulf hurricane that had started well out in the Atlantic. The path of this bird seems obvious.

The total population of a specific species can affect our chances of seeing an individual of that species. We have state records for Brown Pelican and Kirtland's Warbler, but as their numbers diminish, so do our chances of seeing them in our area. Likewise, as certain northern gulls have increased, we have been seeing more of these species in recent years.

This leads to a second type of rarity, one of expansion. The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is a good example. This species has spread its breeding range from Texas and Oklahoma into southwest Missouri. As the species expanded, St. Louis had its first record and has had several more in the past few years. Another type of rarity is usually only temporarily rare. This is the case of introduced species. It is hard to believe the House Sparrow and Starling were once rare birds. The Cattle Egret is rather unique in that it was self-introduced. It is now a common species, but what a commotion that first rare egret caused.

Another type of rarity is the invasion type. These usually, but not always, occur in winter. These usually are northern finches that theoretically have run out of food and push far south of their normal winter range. Snowy Owls, Goshawks, Bohemian Waxwings and others also fall into this category. One may bird for many years without seeing a Bohemian Waxwing and then see 30 to 50 in one day during an invasion.

This is only an outline of a broad and interesting subject. To many this may be of no interest; to those who are - good birding. And to those who like to play games, try predicting our next new species.



BIRDS OF THE ST. LOUIS AREA IN 1973

J. Earl Comfort

A review of the 1973 St. Louis Area birding within a radius of 50 miles shows a composite list of 278 species as of December 15. This total is below our average. However, among the 278 species were quite a few rare birds, many of which were put on the hot line for birders who wished to have a chance to see them.

Our best grebe was the quite rare western species. Ducks kicked in with 21 species. Best duck was a male Barrow's goldeneye found by Dorothy McClaren for her companions, Betty Samuelson and Yvonne Balsiger. This bird is a candidate for the bird of the year. There were 18 kinds of hawks and their allies. Best hawk was the Swainson's. Best of the 31 kinds of shorebirds was the knot. Among the 7 kinds of gulls was the very rare laughing species.

Probably the most exciting of the passerines was a Bohemian waxwing, listed in December. The 38 kinds of warblers yielded a Swainson's, the warblers topping the list for number of species in one family. There were 34 members of the big finch family represented. Best was the uncommon common redpoll.

There were many, many pleasant field trips that resulted in the 278 total. The Busch Wildlife Area in St. Charles County, the most popular birding region, drew the most observers, with this refuge producing a lion's share of the birds. Another area visited was the Shaw's Garden Arboretum in Franklin County where the St. Louis Audubon Society conducted pleasant monthly nature hikes.

Over in Illinois the Calhoun Division of the Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge and its environs drew many birders. Here Sally Vasse was always on hand to conduct the eager visitors. We owe many of the 278 species to the kind co-operation of Sally, including a whistling swan and white pelican.

Of course the birders were accompanied by botanists, butterfly buffs, nature photographers, and many others interested in all phases of nature study. This is one of the pleasures of becoming an all-around nature buff. If the birds won't co-operate there's always something else to look at.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

We have received a copy of a letter sent on November 6, 1973 to St. Louis area congresswoman, Lenore Sullivan. She is also chairman of the committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries:

Dear Mrs. Sullivan:

Thank you for introducing H.R. 10942, the bill to amend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and extend its provisions to cover the new Convention with Japan. It is an important treaty and an important bill, and we want to help get it passed as expeditiously as possible. Would you or a member of your Committee staff please advise us when a hearing is scheduled?

Sincerely yours,

Charles H. Callison
Executive Vice President

We will hope to see information on the progress of this bill in the Audubon magazine. And speaking of knowing what our congressmen are doing, it is depressing to learn that all the Missouri Representatives voted for the Annual 'Pork Barrel' Appropriation Bill, which included further funding for the Meramec Dam. In fact, there were only 26 votes against it. Granted that it is difficult to oppose such a bill which included besides Army Corps of Engineers monies, financing for TVA, Atomic Energy Commission etc. But- it can be done. And it is possible to force consideration of separate items. Both Congressman Sullivan and Symington have sponsored conservation legislation. It would be encouraging to see them take a stand against this potential destruction in their own back yard. Which brings us to-----

AUDUBON BOARD MEETING

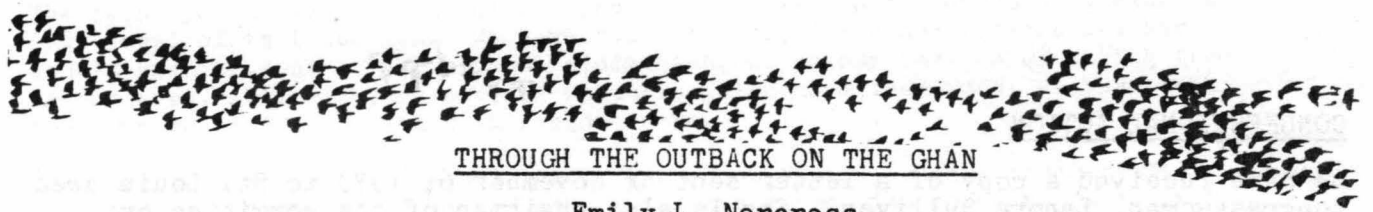
At the November 20th meeting your Board voted the following action: "That the St. Louis Audubon Society give \$100 to the Citizens Committee to Save the Meramec, Inc. and that the Audubon Finance committee consider giving an additional amount, not to exceed \$400. How this amount might be allocated among organizations working to save the Meramec is to be considered by the committee and reported back to the Board at the January meeting." (the 15th)

Several words of explanation might be in order here. First- technicalities. The Board has the authority to spend amounts up to \$100 on its own, but for amounts over that must consult the Finance committee.

Second- reasons for this action. The St. Louis Audubon Society has gone on record as opposing the construction of any dams on the Meramec. (Since the Energy crisis this opposition seems more valid than ever.) Several local organizations are very active in this fight so it seems important to support them financially. Audubon Members are encouraged to do so as individuals by joining the Citizens Committee to Save the Meramec, or by sending a donation to them or to the Sierra Club which is also very much involved, and has a suit pending to halt any further steps toward construction. Address for the Citizens Committee is: Box 88 Leasburg, Mo. 63535.

Tax deductible contributions toward the Sierra Club's suit can be sent to: Sierra Club Foundation, Ed Marks, Treas., Rt. 1, Box 656, Glencoe Mo. 63038

Board meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month. All members are welcome to attend or to bring matters for discussion to the Board. Call J. Marshall Wagner (961-4588) for information as to place of meeting.



THROUGH THE OUTBACK ON THE GHAN

Emily L. Norcross

Bird watching is for the birds, say some people, fearful of muddy treks through marshes and arduous hikes in brambly woods. But even a lazy sybarite can indulge in this sport. He can set up a feeder in his garden, use a car for a blind in the field, or, as I've recently discovered, even bird watch from a train. Of course it takes a special train and I doubt if there are many. But the Ghan in Australia is a special train in many ways.

Short for Afghanistan, the Ghan is the modern replacement for camel caravans imported in the nineteenth century to provide means of reaching the Outback of Australia. The Ghan leaves Adelaide on Australia's south shore twice a week, and proceeds at a singular pace to Alice Springs one thousand miles north, an oasis, as it were, in the center of the continent.

The run (though "run" is hardly an apt word) takes two days and a night, if all goes well. We boarded the train at 7:30 on a Monday morning and were scheduled to arrive at "The Alice" at eleven o'clock Tuesday evening. There's nothing tedious however about the long trip. Passengers are kept on their toes! Comfortable coaches roll along a wide gauge track for the first hundred miles. Then one is changed to new cars waiting on a standard gauge. And a few hundred miles further, at the last outpost of civilization, one crosses the platform of the lonely railroad junction to board sleeping cars on a narrow gauge. There's never a dull on the Ghan!

The crew remains the same, Pullman attendants and dining car stewards changing trains with their passengers. The trip resembles a ship's cruise. Meals, included in the railroad ticket, are served at first and second sittings. The lounge car is furnished with an upright piano which accompanies group singing of Waltzing Matilda. Each car is equipped with a shower bath. And morning tea is served in one's sleeping compartment before the breakfast gong.

The Ghan is peculiarly adapted to bird watching because of the total lack of other visual distractions, and because of its rate of speed. It is forbidden by law to travel more than thirty miles an hour, and we estimated that it usually averaged about fifteen! The narrow gauge is laid on a bed that appears to consist of several inches of sand. Once one has left the fringes of the fertile southern coast the country is dry, desolate, and barely inhabited. We spoke of it as a desert but were corrected. It is arid, not desert, and we learned the distinction before the end of our journey.

The scenery reminded us of certain areas in Arizona and New Mexico. The track ran through a wide plateau with the blue and purple mountains of the Flinders range on the horizon. The flora looked like mesquite, tumble weed, sage. One could see for miles, and looking ahead one could spot the dry water courses coming down from the mountains by a winding ribbon of willows or eucalyptus. Every few hours we would pass a small shed by the track with the name of the stop painted on its side. These were the loading places for the cattle or sheep station whose buildings one could sometimes see far in the distance. Here, the stations, or ranches, are measured in thousand square miles. It is the lucky rancher who now owns a Piper Cub or Cessna for there is no highway through the Outback, and the Ghan, or a horse, is the usual means of transportation.

What excitement when we saw our first emus, those relatives of the ostrich who would stare in wonder at the train before prancing away! Sparrow hawks hovered over the scrub, and frequently we saw a lone wedge tailed eagle. But the most spectacular sights were the cockatoos, the sulphur crested, the red tailed black, and the Galah-- pure white with a pale pink breast. These birds are always in flocks and we would see them in areas where there were clumps of bone dry gaunt trees bravely in leaf. Here too we would see flocks of white throat warblers, known as bush canaries, darting in and out among the sparse greenery.

More spectacular than the cockatoos were the storms. Our first came in early afternoon in brilliant sunshine. Far ahead we saw a black cloud hanging ominously over a mountain. It moved toward us across the plateau and a quarter of an hour later we met. Rain poured like a deluge for five minutes till the cloud passed us, and suddenly as we crossed a trestle over a dry stream bed a wall of water of Biblical proportions advanced down, to, and under us! By the time we reached the next water course its flash flood had passed and gone, leaving only an occasional pool by the thirsty trees. Then followed the rainbow, arching across the whole plateau, a double, seeming at times to be a triple.

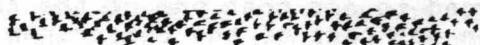
About two o'clock the second afternoon the train came to a stop at a settlement, Oonadatta, the railroad maintenance headquarters for 500 miles of track. There was a small group of workmen's houses, a store whose entrance was crowded with Aborigines, a school, a pub, a round house, and in the distance a fluttering air sleeve indicating a landing strip.

We all jumped out of our comfortable air conditioned cars to stretch our legs and we were hit by a blast of heat and a swarm of flies. Our fellow passengers, chiefly ranchers or miners heading for Alice, or for the back of beyond, or en route to Darwin on the north coast, bought beer at the pub while we bought mosquito netting for veils at the store. Rumors were rife. How long would the train stay at Oonadatta? Was there something wrong with the track ahead? If so, when would it be repaired, and what, now, was our estimated time of arrival at Alice, still 300 miles ahead?

Five hours later, during which time we had many interesting conversations with our new down under friends, and learned all the words to Waltzing Matilda, we got our answer. A flash flood had done the damage, and there was a wash-away of the track up ahead. This was Tuesday. It should be repaired by Friday!

But all was well. At seven o'clock that evening a beautiful 40 passenger plane dipped low over Oondatta and landed on its strip. Flicking away the last of the flies, and with a farewell wave to the engineer, we boarded the plane and were flown up to Alice.

The Ghan ride was indeed an experience. It was a unique introduction to the Outback of down under, to its people, and even to its birds.



AUDUBON NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY SECTION

The Nature Photography Section of the St. Louis Audubon Society now has a Planning Committee. Chairman is Charles W. Hill, Vice-Chairman is Floyd B. Erickson, and other committee members are Herman W. Brune, Earl H. Hath, Al Lodwick, Miss Elizabeth J. Nettles, and Miss Barbara Estill who is Committee Secretary. Liaison members for the Board of Directors of the St. Louis Audubon Society are Lee and Edward Mason. Between 75 and 80 persons attended the organization meeting of the Section on November 14, and audience suggestions have been considered in planning the 1974 programs for A.N.P.S.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 24, 1974, at 7:30 p.m., at the Clayton Savings & Loan Association, Elm and Lockwood, Webster Groves, Missouri. Equipment experts will show and discuss a variety of photographic equipment well suited to nature photography. Planning Committee Chairman Charles Hill will outline the 1974 monthly programs. Presentations will include: demonstrations of techniques; uses of photographic equipment; critiques of members' work; sessions for identification of photo-subjects; instructional explorations into what makes a photograph good. We will also hear from well known photographers and nature experts who will give tips on where to find what, how, and when. There will be monthly photography walks March through November; group participation in special civic events; workshops; and photographic competitions.

Anyone interested in the field of nature photography is cordially invited to attend any meeting of the Photography Section, and especially the January 24 meeting.

FALCONRY- CONTINUED

The rather controversial question of falconry and its relationship to the population of birds of prey was one of the topics discussed at the National Audubon convention last June. Certainly there are two sides to this question. In the last Bulletin we published a request from Edgar Denison for letters of protest against a proposal to allow falconers to possess all types of birds of prey, even endangered species, with the object of promoting breeding in captivity. We have received a response to this appeal from Col. H. H. D. Heiberg Jr., Scott Airforce Base, from which we are publishing excerpts below (slightly paraphrased). We welcome letters from our readers, even if space doesn't always permit using a complete letter:

"As a member of the National Audubon Society.... I must take issue with Mr. Edgar Denison's remarks in the November Bulletin....that the breeding of raptors in captivity is 'dubious'. For proof, see page 132 of the November 1973 Audubon magazine, in which Roxanna Sayre's 'econotes...' reports the successful raising of 20 young peregrines this year at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.....This is a remarkable achievement with far reaching implications which deserves support rather than casual dismissal...

.... While there is no doubt that certain raptor species have suffered population declines this is not true of all species....the proposed regulations are designed specifically to protect those species which are or may be endangered....I refer you also to a statement by Roland C. Clement, Vice President of the National Audubon Society:

'Responsible falconers perform important public education functions on behalf of the birds of prey....What is most needed now is uniform legislation to provide tight regulation of falconry and a cooperative approach to the elimination of commercialism in the taking of arctic breeding peregrines and other species.'*

Falconry has been practiced for more than 4000 years Its attraction to the relative few who....are dedicated to it insures that it will continue to be practiced, legally or otherwise. It seems to me for preferable to regulate it rather than to drive it underground where its abuse....could cause incalculable harm...."

*editors note: I feel forced to add that one of the truly distressing episodes recounted at the Convention was that of the peregrines which attempted for several years to nest on Morro Rock in California. Despite extraordinary round the clock vigilance on the part of those dedicated to preserving the nesting, the nestlings were either stolen or the nest destroyed on several occasions. My failing memory doesn't tell me whether any of the nesting attempts were successful or not. Undoubtedly those who molested these birds were not 'responsible' falconers, but there is no question that a market for such illegally taken birds exists, or no one would have made the perilous climb of that rock to procure them.

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If you know of anyone who should be receiving the Bulletin but isn't, please communicate with Mrs. Rice. Changes in address also should be sent to her.



REPORT FROM NEW GUINEA

Mary C. Wiese

(Last excerpts from letters-continued
from November Bulletin)



10 a.m. August 19, Mt. Hagen Airport

Our plane is late, inevitably, and I've just talked to a man who was carrying a fascinating set of bow and arrows which he has accumulated in various villages. Everything is made of bamboo, the bow, the string (which is a strand tied green to tighten as it dries) and the arrows. There are no feathers or nocks, but judging by the fact that every well-dressed man we see is wearing some kind of feathers, they must be quite accurate on birds. The arrows that are intended for birds or fish are three pronged. Those for pigs or men are larger, some with very elaborate carving.

First thing this morning I went to the weekly market. It was large, very colorful and very crowded, but repetitious since it was almost entirely vegetables and fruits in the typical carefully arranged piles. The vendors have to pay five cents for the right to sit on the ground and spread out their wares. I had no trouble finding the market, just followed the crowd and took the same shortcuts.

Five planes arrived one right after another and ours turned out to be another Fokker Friendship which is nice because the wings are on top and don't interfere with the view. The airport turned into bedlam, of course, and we got off only thirty minutes late. Sometimes I wonder whether New Guinea is really ready for tourists and I think the answer is - not quite yet. On the other hand, it would undoubtedly lose some of its charm if it got too efficient.

1 p.m. August 19, Port Moresby, Papua

I'm sitting in the lobby of the Papuan Hotel waiting for the Massies and Orville Crowder so we can go out to the sewer beds to look for shore birds. Where else? To illustrate how wide a gap there is between the Highlands and Port Moresby, here are some of the events listed on the hotel announcement board: Ansett Ball (Ansett is the local Pan American Airline and we're mad at them because of foul ups); Port Moresby Squash Rackets Club Ball; Insurance Institute Luncheon; Inner Wheel 10th Anniversary Dinner; Turf and Equestrian Club Luncheon; Investment Club Luncheon. Enough?

8 p.m. August 20, Port Moresby

The trip to the sewer beds was a big success. Besides another Bird of Paradise type (Glossy-mantled Manucode) we saw large numbers of beautiful shorebirds, waders and ducks. Today we went out to a forest area with Bill Peckover who is a photographer doing illustrations for a book on the more common New Guinea birds. It's badly needed since there is no good field guide. Since this was Sunday there were many picnickers and swimmers at the rivers we came to, most of them white. Very different from our last river picnic. In the forest we saw a number of entirely new species, since on the south shore we are in quite distinct habitat from that of the north and central area. The most interesting were several female Little King Birds of Paradise and one glimpse of the elusive male.

In the afternoon we drove along the Latoki River gorge up to an overlook above the Rounda Falls. This had once been a beautiful falls, but now there is a massive hydro-electric development and the flow is much diminished. The gorge itself was very interesting because we had seen the series of abrupt breccia escarpments from the plane and it's always fascinating to see geology from above and below. Driving back into town was a little hair-raising because we passed a number of taxi-trucks filled to the gunwales with very merry men, usually with several guitars along and in full song. Gay, but worrisome for Joel who was also coping bravely with the left-hand drive once again.

Port Moresby itself, being the capital and a real metropolis, has boulevards (often called parades) and a few stretches of four-lane highway. It is built on a series of hillsides, some of which go abruptly down to the water. This means that the town is divided into many clumps of buildings, wherever there is enough flat land to squeeze them in. There is one section called Koki which consists of houses, built on stilts over the water, and anchored sampans. It looks all very romantic from a distance and is probably very squalid close to. Almost all the houses, no matter how fancy, are built up high from the ground because of the possibility of storms. In the olden days the natives were afraid to do this because sorcerers could get under a house which is raised off the ground. Sorcery is still a factor to deal with, but they have been persuaded to build this way for health reasons. Besides which, it's a place to keep the pigs or dogs, or a car in the rare event you have one, or to hang the children's swing.

11 a.m. August 21, Port Moresby

We're about to leave for the airport for the flight to Brisbane, Australia, the first leg of the long way home. We had another foray to the sewer beds early this morning. There is an ineffable beauty in a sunrise over a sewer bed, despite the slight odor of effluent, and the birds were there in even larger numbers. Incidentally, in case you think we're totally mad, this is a Wildlife Area. Someone had the wits to realize that the birds were going to congregate there anyway and to have them protected. There's quite a sign there in three languages. We add Coast Motu in this area, which I can't begin to translate; it's apparently a true native tongue. The English says: "No Entry, No Fishing, No Hunting." The Pidgin for that last phrase is "iu no ken patrapim masket hia", an onomato-poetic way of saying, 'don't fire a gun'. (You no can fire musket herd)

I went into the Catholic cathedral near our hotel this morning. Like the little country church, they have included a great many indigenous features in their worship fixtures; a large and probably ancient ceremonial drum, bird of paradise skins, masks, shells for alms - basins and baptismal font, etc.

I hate to be leaving and yet I'm anxious to be home!

calendar.....



Friday, January 11, 8:00 pm WGNSS MEETING, County Library - see notice page 4
 Friday, January 18, 8:00 pm ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY-SPECIAL MEETING, County Library. Jack Schramm and Ed Stegner - speakers on Environmental Legislation- see notice page 2
 Saturday, January 19, 9:00 am AUDUBON NATURE WALK at Shaw's Garden Arboretum, Gray Summit, Missouri. Meet at main gate. ... Also on February 16
 Thursday, January 24, 7:30 pm NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY SECTION, Clayton Savings and Loan, Elm and Lockwood, Webster Groves. See notice page 9
 Sunday, January 27, 9:00 am AUDUBON NATURE WALK at Tyson Park. Meet at entrance. ... Also February 24
 Friday, February 1, 8:15 pm AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM at the Ethical Society, 9001 Clayton Rd. - Galapagos - Martin Bruce
 Friday, February 8, 8:00 pm WGNSS MEETING, County Library - see notice page 4
 Saturday, February 16, 9:00 am ANNUAL EAGLE COUNT, Clarksville, Missouri
 8:00 am, see page 1
 Friday, March 8, 8:15 pm AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM at the Ethical Society, 9001 Clayton Rd. - Grassroots Jungle - Fran Hall
 WEBSTER GROVES NATURE STUDY SOCIETY Midweek birding trips will continue as usual. For information on Wednesday trips call Sallie Phillips, 821-2216. For Thursday trips call Helen Bowman, 531-1748 or Rose Ann Bodman, 961-2583
 AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS For further information and carpool arrangements call Earl Hath, 965-8642, nights and weekends.
